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SUBJECT: ECE - Beijing+15 Regional Review Meeting

Summary

¶1. SUMMARY. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) convened its "Beijing+15 Regional Review" meeting, November 2-3, 2009, in Geneva. The meeting will feed into next year's session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), to be held at UN headquarters on March 1-12, 2010. The 2010 CSW will undertake as part of its work a fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), in 1995 (Beijing+15 commemoration). The main purpose of the ECE meeting was to take stock of the progress made in the region on gender equality and women's empowerment and to address the major challenges ahead.

END SUMMARY.

¶2. France chaired the ECE Beijing+15 meeting, with Albania, Norway, and Ukraine serving as vice-chairs. Jan Kubis, Executive Secretary of the ECE, and Carolyn Hannan, Director of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, made opening remarks. ECE members and representatives of accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were invited to participate. It should be noted that NGOs participated actively, and made several formal and informal statements. The Beijing+15 review process includes the submission of national reports by UN member states, which are subsequently posted on the websites of the respective UN regional commissions. The U.S. report has been drafted and will be submitted to the ECE in the very near future.

Remarks by Carolyn Hannan, Director, UN Division for the Advancement of Women

¶3. In her opening remarks, Carolyn Hannan, speaking on behalf of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, highlighted significant events that will take place in 2010. In addition to the CSW (March 1-12, at UN headquarters), there are the following:

-- The Annual Ministerial Review of ECOSOC, in July, will focus on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women."
-- The UN General Assembly will include a high-level event on women, in September.
-- The 10th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, will occur in October.
-- The 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 10th anniversary of its Optional Protocol will occur in December.

¶4. Hannan highlighted progress in the UN over the last five years:

-- In October 2006, the Secretary General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women was launched in the UN General Assembly.
-- In 2008, the Secretary General launched his UNiTE to end violence against women campaign, and has reached out to involve male organizations.
-- In 2008 and 2009, Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888, and 1889 were adopted.
-- In March 2009, the Secretary General launched his database on

violence against women. 81 countries have provided input.

-- The Interagency Task Force on violence against women has pilot projects in ten countries.

-- The UN Trust Fund on violence against women continues to attract contributions.

-- More states continue to ratify CEDAW and its Optional Protocol.

-- Recent CSW Agreed Conclusions have contained concrete recommendations at the global and regional levels.

-- Active women's groups and networks continue to be formed.

¶5. Hannan said further progress is needed in the following areas:

-- combating violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations;

-- improving maternal health (MDG 5);

-- increasing women's participation in decision-making, including increasing women's representation in national parliaments;

-- increasing women's participation in economic decision-making, and their access to economic and financial resources, including land, property, and housing;

-- lifting women out of poverty, as women are disproportionately represented in the informal sector or perform unpaid work.

¶6. Hannan also commented on the new composite gender entity, noting that a three-year process led to the adoption of UNGA Resolution 63/311 on "System-Wide Coherence." She reported that the Secretary General wants to move quickly on setting up a composite entity. He looks to member states for decisions on the details of the entity by the 2010 CSW. These would include specifics on the entity's staffing, funding, governance, and reporting lines.

Statements by ECE members

¶7. Statements by the ECE members highlighted advancements made and challenges remaining.

Achievements mentioned by delegates included: women's participation in the labor market; women's political participation at local levels; new or strengthened legislation on gender-based violence; and the creation or strengthening of institutional mechanisms on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Remaining challenges included: the gap between legislation and implementation; decent work for women and labor market segregation; the gender pay gap; the situation of migrant women and women belonging to minority groups; the persistence of gender stereotypes; the lack of sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data; and the inclusion of men in advancing gender equality, including through better sharing of family responsibilities.

U.S. Statement

¶8. The U.S. statement addressed recent trends, ongoing challenges, and areas on which we believe the United Nations and member states should focus: violence against women in armed conflict and recent actions in the UN Security Council to counteract it; the growing realization that empowering women makes good economic sense and the need to strengthen public-private partnerships; the increasing realization of the need to involve "non-traditional" allies-including men and religious leaders-in combating violence against women; the need not only to adopt laws on women's equality but also to vigorously implement them; and the need for all countries to muster up political will. The U.S. statement will be available on the U.S. Mission Geneva website, www.us-mission.ch, as well as on the ECE website www.unece.org.

¶9. In addition to statements by governmental and NGO participants, the ECE meeting contained panel discussions on three topics: (1) gender-sensitive economic policies in the context of the economic and financial crisis; (2) gender and the corporate sector; and (3) new partnerships, networks, and alliances for gender equality.

Outcome

¶10. The outcome of the meeting was a non-negotiated document

entitled "Chairperson's Conclusions" that presented the Chair's summary of the discussions along with his recommendations for further action. His recommendations included: enforcing legislation against gender-based violence; defending the rights of women migrant workers and those working in the informal sector; engaging a wide range of actors, including NGOs and the private sector; reconciling work and family responsibilities; and promoting a gender-sensitive analysis of the impact of the financial crisis. Several delegations, including the United States, suggested minor revisions to the Chair's text (most of which were accepted). The ECE member states joined consensus on this document. The Chair clarified that the document reflected the discussion and recommendations put forth during the session, but that not all the ECE member states agreed with all the proposals put forward. The Chairperson's Conclusions will also be available on the ECE website.

¶11. The U.S. delegation to the ECE Beijing+15 Regional Review Meeting cleared this report.

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